

'APPREHENDING ATHLETIC' - re-visited

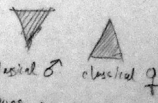
Townsend on
aesthetic of 'non-
billion' representation
(Post-Corridor)

Given the moral, religious & other hang-ups which tend to assign 'low' & 'base' motivations toward depictions of the naked female (even on certain specific, culturally set like Corneo/Roman - Renaissance - inspired parameters) - is it actually possible to present ~~the~~ a nude image (in my case for this research project - an analysis, androgynous) hermaphroditic image - which by its definition tends to rely upon the presentation of primary & secondary characteristics to be identifiable as such) that can be free from mis-readings of the work as objectionable, sexist, exploitative or pornographic? Or indeed simply be re-appropriated back by a certain 'male gaze' (cf. the 1970's feminist 'body artists', e.g. Carolee Schneeman, who were aware of the possibility that their naked representations could attract 'the wrong kind of attention')



Lisa Lyons -
1st notable female
body builder -
sketch (loosely)
after Mapplethorpe
(body like
Lyon, 1982)

Reverse longless



Classical ♂ classical ♀

Does the absence of
body hair add or
reduce any possible
'attribution'?

Have we risked a
Virgilian
female
after da Vinci?

Attempt at
re-codifying
the inherent
to body name
of the 1953
Marilyn Monroe
Playboy cover
fold piece →

See Neale
(pp 53-4) on
the 'sanitisation'
of glamour to
be avoided by
our students in
a 'respectable'
elite art market
- a far closer the
moral values
realise they are to
the 'art form'
boundary line

The female body-
builder appropriates
the hypermasculine
male form for her
own purposes and
enables the male
viewer of physicality
on her own terms...
(Class. dissertation 2012)



4.8:7.5

→ 0.64 : 1 waist:hip
ratio



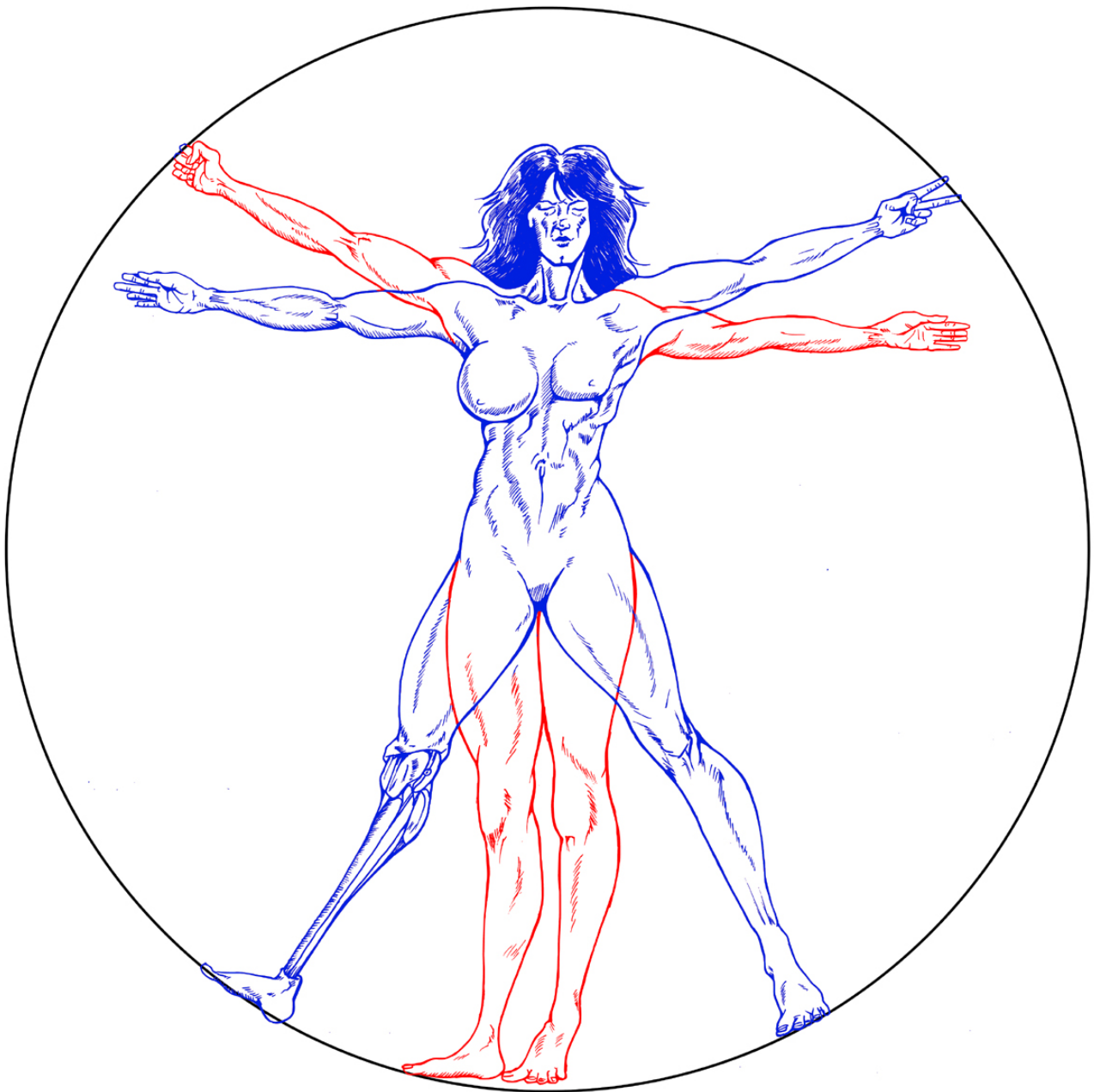
Marilyn & Me

In creating this work, I set out to ask a simple visual question: what is the essential difference between this self-portrait, and its inspiration? The viewer may be inclined toward various thoughts, such as the glorification of a specific type of glamour from a certain historical period, a desire to titillate, to capture the essential, ideal form of an individual or to please a certain 'gaze'.

Given the moral, religious and other limiting concerns which tend to assign "base" motivations towards depictions of naked figures outwith certain prescribed arenas, part of my current research is set towards discovering if it's possible to depict a nude figure that can be free from misreadings, assumptions or appropriation? My concerns derive from the kind of 1970s body art by performers like Carolee Schneeman, who were always aware of the possibility that their work might attract the "wrong kind of attention". This issue weighs on my more graphic work such as comic book illustration, which, as a genre, is already prejudged (in the Anglo-American world) as culturally low, and therefore expected to depict sex and violence in the most predictably base and titillating forms.

While this is true especially of my 1960s/70s American and British counter-cultural 'comix' influences, these were a product of the 1960s protest culture in general. This would be reflected in a very specific way by the Vienna Actionists whose primal viscosity I have tentatively begun to incorporate into my own work, if not their more incendiary shock tactics. Through works such as this, I aim to rewrite the visual rules of what is deemed to be "acceptable", by carefully experimenting with what, in an aesthetic sense, may be considered fairly as "provocative" rather than "oppressive".



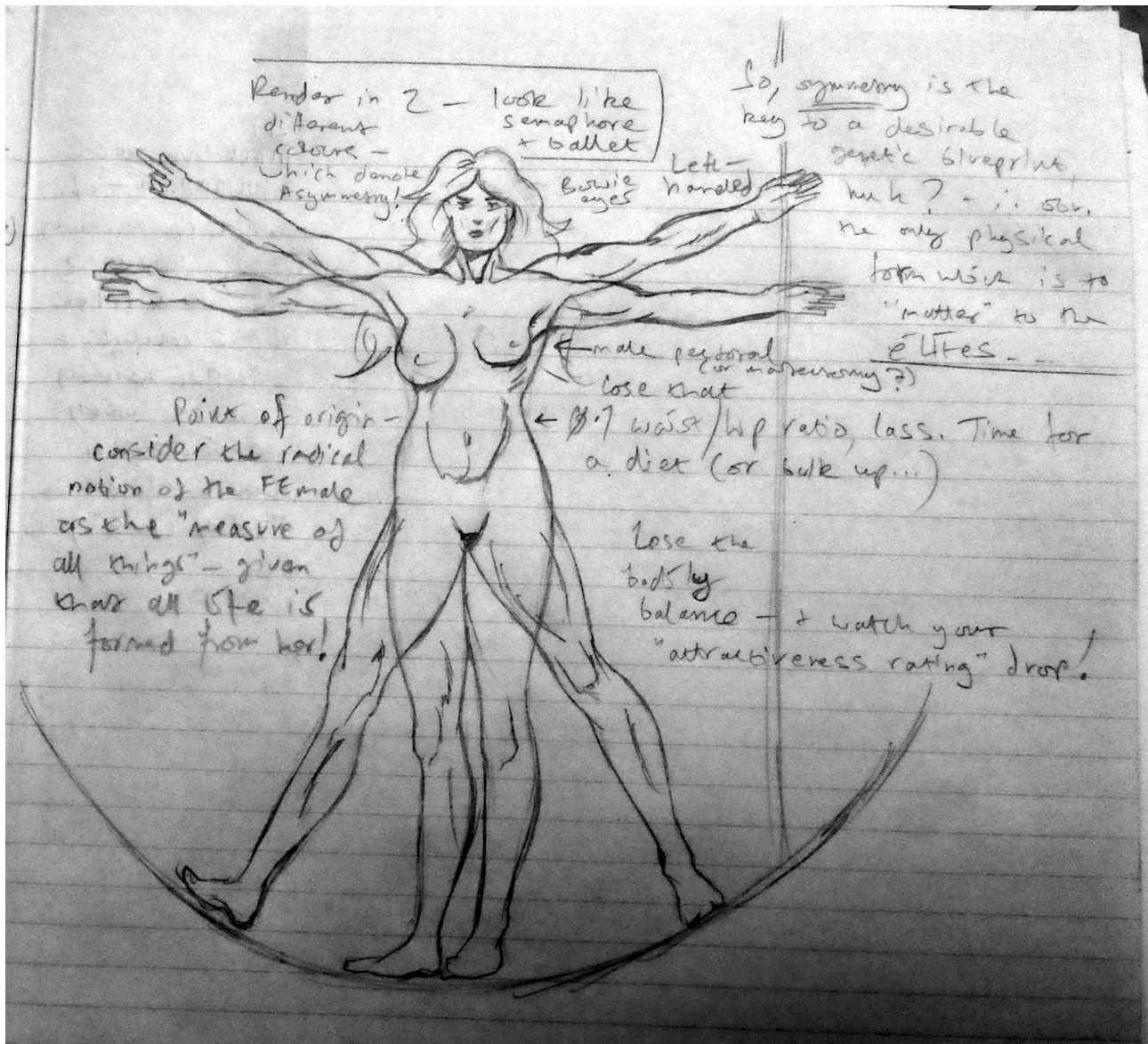


Vitruvian

Working after Leonardo (himself influenced by the original human proportions to architecture by Vitruvius, 1st Century BC), I wanted to update what has long been accepted as a model for all Western, élitist art, culture and society – that “man is the Measure of all things”, assuming, of course, a European hetero-normative narrative of embodied idealism. These Renaissance Ideals have embedded themselves so deeply in Western minds that they are still reflected in all mechanics of ordering in European cultures and oppose the low, or marginal, form as inferior and irrelevant. It is the body as a source of both knowledge and power, cf. Foucault, enshrining the right to rule, to judge, to be worthy, in a specific physical form which is itself reflected in art, in architecture, In policy-making, in law, etc. This mode of analysis is derived from my Honours dissertation research into the origins of cultural and political binary oppositions, mainly through the work of Stallybrass & White (see Contextual Review section).

This ambiguous figure was designed to correct this imbalance, having hermaphroditic (or ‘grotesque’ - after Bakhtin, or even ‘abject’, after Kristeva) qualities, by embodying what is marginal, hidden, worrying: the aggressive fist is countered by a victory V sign; the middle fingers

outstretch to play with the recent media alarm that homosexuality can be determined by the comparative length of one's index and ring fingers (left); facial features are intended to look androgynous but also slightly Asian; etc.





The Blurred Line

Statement: The purpose here was to literally blur the lines between genders, and the perception of gender - what makes a gendered photograph? Is there such a thing as a gendered pose? The presence of the guitar signifies the posed nature of performance, after Bruce McLean's *Nice Style* (1970s "World's first pose band") and the accordingly striking, yet empty, gestures employed by those in the public eye (and who know they are being documented).

The blurred image is rendered as the indefinable, the ambiguous – echoing the self of the artist who exists in a 'blurry' position between gender poles. The binaries of black and white are deliberately manipulated to create a 'middle ground' of actuality, a 'grey area' of subdued polarity – in which the artist exists as an ambivalent individual who oscillates between, yet is composed of aspects of both, these poles.

These images grew out of Gerhard Richter's painterly blur technique used, e.g, in October 18 1977.

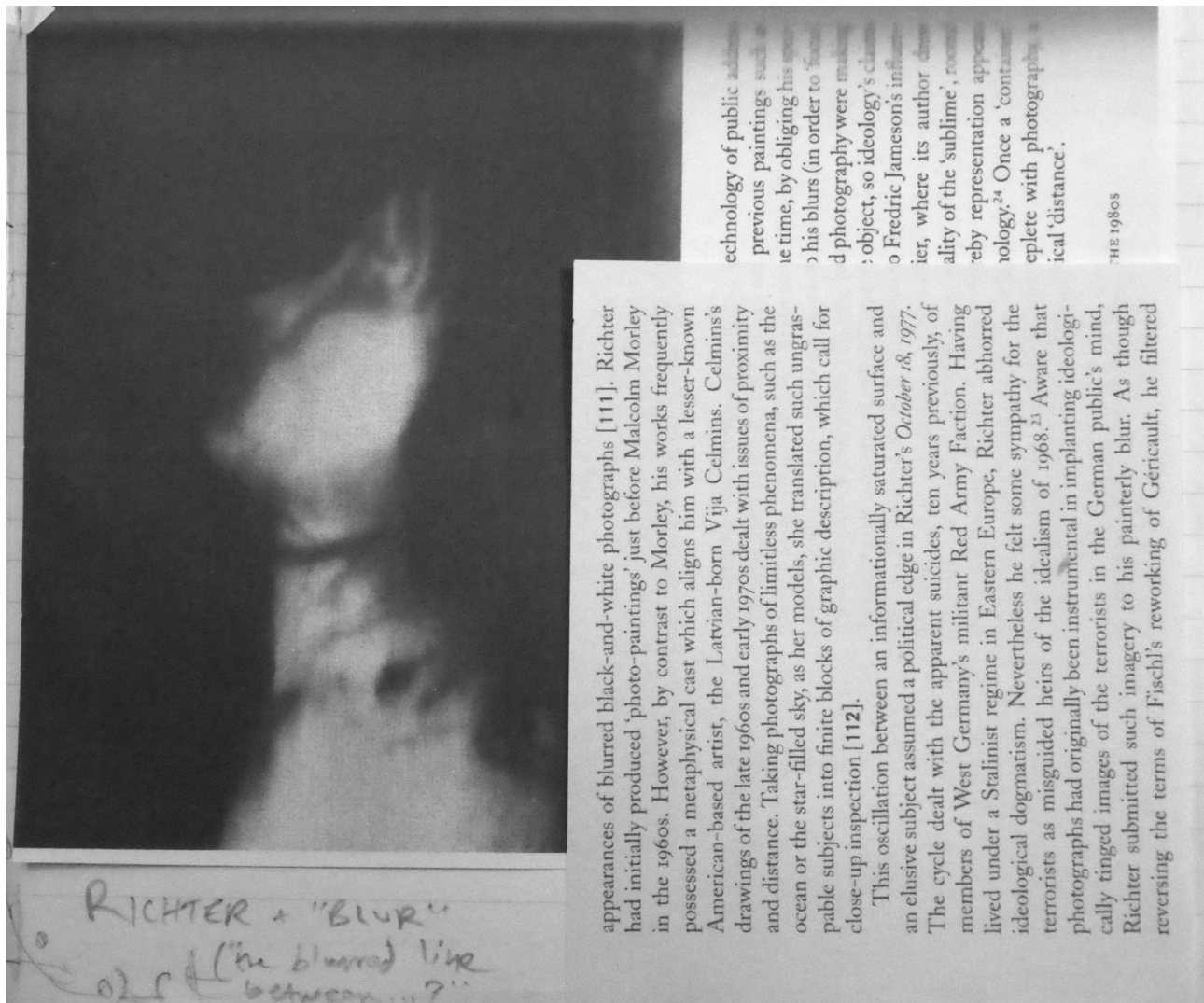
Reflections: I choose to 'blur' the distinction between two diametrically opposed poles - black and white - and take up residence in the space between them, the 'grey area' in which the artist themselves inhabits as a result of their genderqueer nature and state of being - an ambiguous, ambivalent individual who oscillates between, yet is composed of aspects of both, these poles.

Significantly, what constitutes a 'feminine' pose? One that is constructed to show off a model's physical assets or suggest submissiveness - seduction - or embody a viewer's desire? Since the 1960s the long-haired male has flirted with androgyny (echoed by rock music performers), the outline - in the broadest, most literal sense - is therefore blurred. As the blurring of distinctions between dichotomies (high/low culture, popular/elitist, beautiful/grotesque) is one of the essences of postmodernism, so the ambivalence invites a levelling of partisan tendencies, allowing the viewer to adjust their position (ontologically, or even ideologically as in Richter's blue paintings cited above) in terms of what they perceive. Or what they choose to perceive, in tune with their own inner theories of perception.

By reducing the human model to an essentialist schematic of basic signifying details - hair, underwear and high heels suggest products of desire, whether a dancer, stripper, model or such - and specific gestures and poses - I aim to suggest to the viewer a means of 'filling in' the deliberately obscured details, a semi-amorphous form onto which they may project their own

interests, concerns, or fantasies – much as celebrities, rock stars, have the desires and hang-ups of their followers projected onto them, whether deliberately or not.

A more personal interpretation could also view the work as a dissolution of the self into the empty artifices of narcissistic self-interest as embodied in the cult of the 'selfie' and the constant posting of such images in search of 'hits' and likes' on social media, conforming to an audience's expectations of how one ought to present (and desires to be seen), rather than how one actually *is*. The blurry line between what truly *is* and what is *perceived* is therefore brought into focus, whilst simultaneously throwing the actual subject into ambiguity.'





Nikita V Sarah Connor

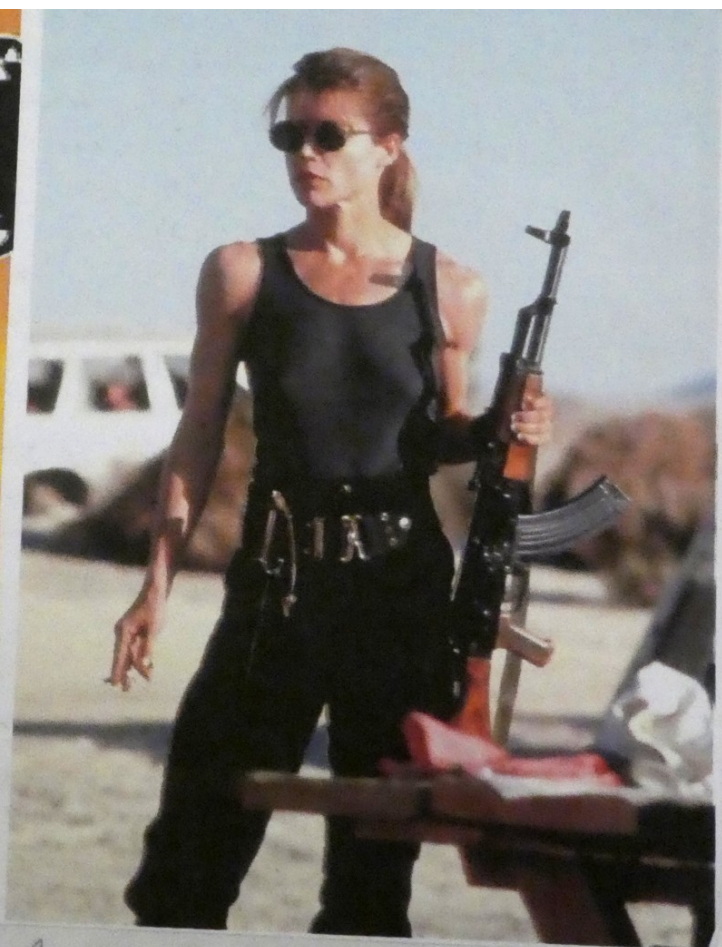
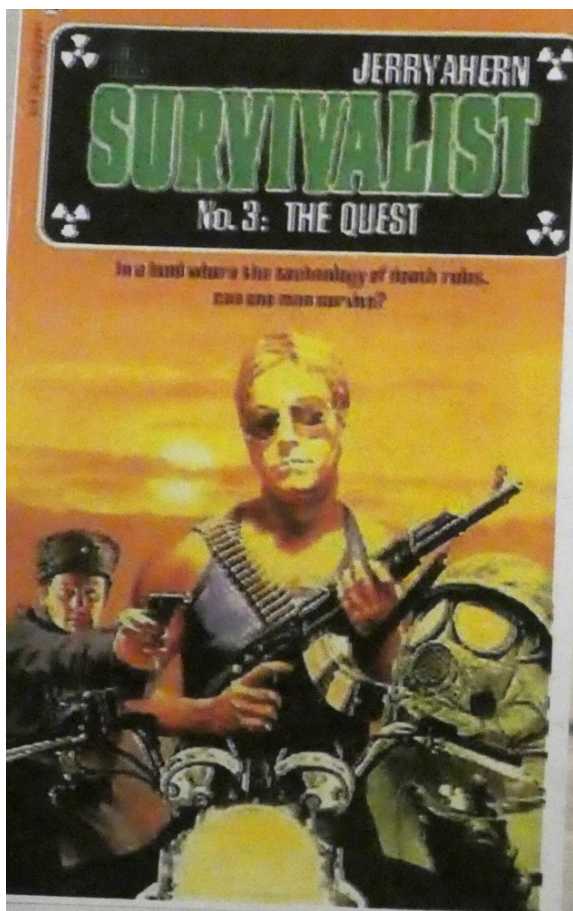
In this double self-portrait, I chose to respond to two images – very similar in structure and yet very distant in underlying meaning – which have hung separately on my walls for over 20 years. By uniting the similarly posed female action film characters in this way, I intended to highlight the contrasting representations.

Taking its cue from Cindy Sherman's Untitled Film Stills series, 'Nikita Vs Sarah' represents two iconic gun-toting female characters from two separate films, released two years apart.

Presented back to back in my remake, they appear to ready themselves for a face-off: a conflict between European high glamour, and American attitude. By portraying both characters in reverse postures, I aimed to unify the two images, as well as the two opposing aspects of my own self – on one side, the glamorous, even passive; on the other, the active, even aggressive – yet both united by a symbol of potential action – a masculine object in female hands.

The Connor persona is one of genuine force – a modern-day Amazon while Nikita remains as perfect as when she first entered the scene. TW Adorno despairs at "the actress who manages to appear fresh and painstakingly made up with her hair perfectly arranged even in the midst of the most appalling dangers, in a tropical typhoon..." and concludes generally, "Mass culture is unadorned make-up."





Sarah Connor as "female hero" (as contrasted to Paglia's construction of the "male heroine") - the active, warlike female lead as the flipside to the passive, suffering male lead. ("Sexual Personae" on the formation of the male heroine - who is opposed/contrasted by the Amazon, the Spenserian female knight, etc.)